

Sullivan Square Disposition Study

Public Meeting: 9-19-13

Meeting Notes

- Public Comment: We are proud of our safe community. If commercial space is built should there be requirement of retail space? Should we request to include a minimum amount of retail in the RFPs to require life on the street into the later evening?
 - **BRA Response:** Yes, use consideration is what we want to work out during this process. Mandating active uses is something we'd like to see. There are also various design considerations so that there is maximized visibility in store fronts to prevent crime.
- Public Comment: Regarding affordable housing, the City of Boston already has a minimum requirement. Our concern is that recently, developers have been coming to Boston and doing large buy outs for their requirement instead of building the housing. Let's mandate affordable housing be built in RFP. Establish number of affordable housing units not price.
 - **BRA Response:** The affordable housing executive order will be in affect when the RFPs are issued. In this process, we will be writing the guidelines for the RFPs not the actual RFPs.
- Public Comment: Make sure there is no cash substitution for units.
- Public Comment: The percentage of affordable housing should be higher than what is required in the executive order.
- Public Comment: What is the critical number of housing to support the market?
 - **BRA Response:** We had a presentation in July that went over the market numbers. That presentation is posted on our website.
- Public Comment: It would be helpful to have some more reference points on the maps such as the commuter rail tracks.
- Public Comment: Is there a possibility to widen and landscape on the MBTA parcel?
 - **MBTA Response:** Well, we are subdividing the parcel for development.
 - **BTD Response:** On the street network redesign we have incorporated a few extra feet.
- Public Comment: During redesign of streets is parking a consideration?
 - **Consultant Response:** We will get to that discussion in a bit but that is why we would like to host another longer meeting in the near future.
- Public Comment: The DCR Mystic River pathway to be completed is the nicest way to get to Assembly Square and not the redesigned street network.
- Public Comment: The street between parcels 3 & 4 is a desire line to the water, can we include that in the maps?
 - **Consultant Response:** Sure.
- Public Comment: The current bus garage doesn't it go straight to the seawall. Will the MBTA be putting that up?
 - **MBTA Response:** The MBTA is granting an easement to DCR. There are structural issues with the seawall and there is ground loss. We are hoping the path will be built soon so we can stabilize the ground and then we will fence off the bus yard.

- Public Comment: One of the issues that came up in previous process is underpass for people coming from Somerville.
 - **Consultant Response:** Yes, we know roughly how it will be shaped.
- Public Comment: Is there room for landscaping? Hardscaping?
 - **Consultant Response:** Hopefully, we haven't gotten to that layer of detail.
- Public Comment: We want well landscaped roads. Will there be sidewalks on both sides, can it be accommodated?
 - **Consultant Response:** Yes, you don't have to chose one side or the other but you might want to emphasize one over the other.
- Public Comment: The sight lines to the bridge, skyline etc. should be maintained.
- Public Comment: Would like to know from developers what the parking space per unit ratio is.
- Public Comment: We don't need to add a high parking ratio to the RFP to support community and retail uses since this will be transit oriented development.
- Public Comment: Is there an example of where those ratios are in place?
 - **BTD Response:** All ratios from BTD. All maximums there shall not be more than a certain number. For example, if you have 100 units, there should not be more than 15 spaces. Our experience is that with buildings close to T stops, developers are comfortable with this ratio. Affordable, rental versus condo are also factors. Downtown, some buildings are coming in with no parking. Bullfinch triangle is coming in at around a .5 ratio.
- Public Comment: Is that based on rental or purchased?
 - **BTD Response:** It depends, we could look at adjusting the ratio depending on type.
 - **Consultant Response:** Keep in mind the empty commercial parking spaces there will be.
- Public Comment: Usually the developer who realizes that parking is an issue gains community support.
- Public Comment: We are already talking about a limited retail capacity and newcomers to the neighborhood don't have as many cars. It is more important to preserve land space for retail opportunities, in order to get all the space we can. A lot of the people who are likely to come to the area won't have cars.
- Public Comment: I can't see a ratio of less than one space per unit.
- Public Comment: This will be a new and different area from rest of the neighborhood. This development will be focused on a T station. There will also be bike amenities and connections. Station landing way over built their parking. This is a future project that should reflect future needs.
 - **Consultant Response:** We have a lot of data on shared parking.
 - **BRA Response:** This will be a new neighborhood. There is a possibility that residents in this area would be eligible for a different resident sticker. If it becomes the case that residents here wouldn't have the parking stickers that would allow them park in regular Charlestown resident parking areas, how would they necessarily affect other parts of Charlestown?
 - **BTD Response:** We can get creative on how resident parking requirements work here.
- Public Comment: That's no good because they'll just sue and get it anyway.
- Public Comment: Will there be mandatory car share spaces?
 - **BTD Response:** Yes, for years now we have required new buildings, garages etc. to include them as well as make bike accommodations.

- Public Comment: How?
 - **BTD Response:** The developer of a new development has to sign an agreement with the City. Developers are happy to do it since it makes their property more marketable.
- Public Comment: Regarding the T station site, what about putting the tallest building stacked toward the back?
- Public Comment: Who is using all of this parking? People coming and parking to then use the T or people already here?
 - **Consultant Response:** Likely a combination of both.
- Public Comment: How many are coming from outside?
 - **Consultant Response:** We don't know exact numbers but the MBTA requires a minimum of at least 225 spaces.
- Public Comment: Why are we absorbing the parking from other communities?
 - **BRA Response:** Right now we are talking about the MBTA's land. That is a stipulation from the MBTA because of the requirements of bonds that they have issued.
- Public Comment: Is there an agreement between the MBTA and the City of Boston?
 - **MBTA Response:** No, we don't have a written agreement.
- Public Comment: We don't want Sullivan Square to absorb the parking for people other than those who work and live in the area.
 - **MBTA Response:** There is a large demand for parking as you know. People using the spaces are your neighbors. We are required to provide safe and available parking, and it's also a matter of revenue. I understand the desire to make the area more pedestrian friendly, and we are working to meet that goal and parking goal. There are circumstances that led us to this bond issue which has enabled, among other things, no recent fare increases.
- Public Comment: We understand and can be sensitive to revenue issues.
 - **MBTA Response:** Half of Sullivan square is currently parking. There is an opportunity to consolidate it here. The MBTA is happy to help eliminate the 2/3 of surface parking currently in the square.
- Public Comment: This proposal of all the parking is too large of an impact on the community.
 - **BRA Response:** This is just one site. Our consultants have done a lot of work to model all of the parcels and we need to go through all the other parcels.
- Public Comment: Can we step the buildings back? The way they are modeled now are too in-your-face.
 - **Consultant Response:** These are diagrammatic but we can look at other options.
- Public Comment: There is housing on the other side of the highway. Could there be opportunities for sound dampening and maybe an entrance to the T on the other side too?
- Public Comment: Is it possible to build over I-93?
- Public Comment: Is the MBTA interested in dedicated bus lanes?
 - **Consultant Response:** That discussion happened in an earlier stage of the study.
 - **BRA Response:** That is something to be worked out by BTD. An easy way to think about it is that from curb to curb is BTD's planning domain. The land is the BRA's planning domain.
- Public Comment: How tall is the parking garage?
 - **Consultant Response:** We looked at a version of it being 60 feet
- Public Comment: Can we say no surface parking here?

- **Consultant Response:** We considered that but the way the parcels are formed there isn't capacity to fill out the parcel with the building. With only a few garages we can cover all the parking needs for all the parcels.
 - **BTD Response:** It might be a good exercise to do a survey of all the parking in the area with shared parking included.
 - **BRA Response:** We can't make any promises for parking that isn't public land.
 - Public Comment: What about parking on MBTA parcels?
 - **BRA Response:** That's at capacity being used by T.
 - Public Comment: Can we consider taller buildings on the Alford street side so that we can get considerable landscaping on that side of the street as well?
 - **Consultant Response:** That's possible.
 - Public Comment: Would like to see the greening of the area made for pedestrians and cyclists and families. Willing to give up some height to achieve that.
 - **BTD Response:** Rutherford Ave can also be adjusted by a few feet.
 - Public Comment: These buildings should be a gateway to our community.
 - Public Comment: Too much height on T station parcel.
 - Public Comment: This massing is terrific.
 - Public Comment: There is a nice split of the massing on parcels 3 and 7.
- Consultant Response:** Yes, we are trying to provide for sight lines to the park.
- Public Comment: Assuming that this is just for massing purposes, there will be more design variation.
 - Public Comment: Building on park parcel can be higher for step down effect from highway.
 - **Consultant Response:** Yes there is some need for roofline variation.
 - **Public Comment:** Park ideas to remember are the canal and the fountain from previous park. It would be ideal to have references to those.